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sticks, in the holes that have been made, in order to keep them from closing up. After the healing of the wound, these plugs are, however taken out, and it is only when the boys have reached the age of puberty, that the ear-lobe is gradually distended by means of plugging with a succession of ear blocks, or ear-lobe discs, of increasing sizes. Only youths of mature age, and men, are allowed to take part in certain religious dances. At the performance of these, it is of especial importance to be protected from evil spirits. According to the belief of the Indians, ear discs afford them such protection,[1] and it is therefore possible that this is the reason why the boys begin wearing ear discs only after having attained puberty. For reasons which I shall explain below, I consider that the *piercing of the ear-lobes by no means always implies wearing of ear-lobe discs*. Among the Choroti, the ears of little girls are often pierced in the same way as in the case of the boys[2] (see the woman with pierced ear-lobes in fig. 22), *but never once did I see a Choroti woman wearing discs in her ears*, nor is there in the literature on these Indians any photographic evidence to be found, as far as I know, of Choroti women wearing ear discs. Further; neither Baron Erland Nordenskiöld,[3] nor Doctor Rafael Karsten, both explorers who have lived for a long time among the Choroti, are now able to recollect with any certainty having seen any Choroti woman wearing ear discs.

To cause bleeding by perforating the skin, has among the Chorotis, as among other tribes in the Chaco — a magic significance, and the possession of many scars is considered a great advantage. Thus, for instance, the Chaco Indians will with ostentation and satisfaction show even scars from bites of the palometa fish. When the Choroti believe themselves possessed by some evil spirit, they prick themselves with sharp-pointed bone awls, and imagine that the spirit leaves the body with the outflowing blood. About this custom, Karsten writes: »If the arm fails or trembles in pulling the bow, its weakness is, according to the belief of the Chorotis, due to the presence of a mohsek in the blood and they think that the evil demon will leave the body with the blood drawn. The scars left by the cuts are kept up with care and shown with satisfaction,

[1] Karsten (4), p. 134, and Grubb (1), p. 72.

[2] Nordenskiöld observed in a Choroti village that *all* the girls had their ears pierced. According to a letter of his, dated 13 May, 1921. Rockefstad collection of manuscripts, volume 1921, letter N.

[3] According to letter referred to in footnote 2.

? L should be Choroti. - Annlyst]

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almost with pride. *Evidently it is thought that the very scars afterwards act as a sort of charm against the spirits.*'[1]

If scars left by wounds are considered to possess desirable, magical properties, it would easily be supposed that perforations that have been kept open must possess the same properties in a greatly enhanced degree. Among the Chiriguano, neighbours of the Choroti, the actual piercing of the lower lip constituted the most important of the ceremonial acts performed on the boys on their having attained puberty, and among the Chané — whose culture is akin to that of the Chiriguano — not only was the lower lip pierced on this occasion, but the boys were also given other wounds on the body.[2]

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From what I have adduced above, it will therefore be seen that, according to the belief of the Indians, *the making of punctures or perforations on the body, has in itself magic effects, and, consequently, that these magic effects are not believed to arise with the fixing of some ornamental object of magical character — e. g., a tembeta, or an ear disc — into the perforation.*

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This being so, here, in my opinion, lies the explanation of the fact that Choroti girls sometimes have pierced ear-lobes, although it has never *with certainty* been shown that they ever wear ear discs. On the other hand, from reasons I shall present below, it is *probable* that old Choroti women, with distended ear-lobes, *exceptionally* do wear ear discs.

I myself, as well as other investigators of the Chaco peoples, have seen elderly women among the Choroti with holes in their ears so large that one was forced to suppose that the lobes had been stretched in some way or other. Such stretching, however, may not *necessarily* be due to the wearing of ear blocks, but *may* have been produced by manual manipulation. That, by such means, perfectly monstrous distension of the soft parts of the body can very well be brought about, is proved by, among other things, the practice of the Hottentot women of lengthening out — merely by frequent pulling — the labia minora into an enormous size.[3] A similar stretching of the hole in the ear-lobe might, from the Indians' point of view, have for its object the increasing, proportionately to its size, the magic properties of the hole. Among the Incas, the size

[1] Karsten (4), p. 157. Italics by von Rosen.
[2] Karsten (4), p. 200.
[3] von Luschan (1), p. 378.

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way, *and by renewed research among the Indians*, that we shall be enabled to obtain a thorough knowledge of their conception of magic blood-letting by means of awls.

In the foregoing I have mentioned that Choroti bow-staves are sometimes provided with a small skin casing, slipped on, and that on opening one of these casings I found that it contained excrements from some herbivorous animal. It is of course impossible to tell with certainty what the motive was for putting on this skin casing (see pp. 88 and 89), but I think it probable that it was put on the bow for some magic reason. It is noteworthy that it contained excrement. The fact of this being so is a circumstance that, in my opinion, especially points to the casing being of a magical character, for, according to the Chaco Indians' way of thinking, certain excrements possess magic properties and are often made use of in casting spells.[1]

All kinds of illnesses are by the Choroti considered to be caused by evil spirits. As yet, however, we know but little of these Indians' conception of the character and curing of different illnesses. Once Nordenskiöld called in medical aid from a medicine man among the Choroti, and this is how he describes the way in which the medicine man set about it:

'On many occasions, in the villages, I have seen the medicine men practising their profession. One day, among the Choroti, when I was feeling a bit seedy, I called one of those gentry to my camp. Giving out that I had a severe pain in the lower part of my chest, I asked him if he cared to cure me. He promised to come to me in the evening. At nightfall he arrived, accompanied by a colleague. They insisted on being left alone with me. Mobery and Andersson were consequently turned out, and sentries were posted so as to prevent anyone unauthorized gaining access to the hut. For a start, they made me strip to the skin, and then lie down. They stroked me with their hands over the chest, the sides of my body and the stomach, and then they spat on me. After that, they set to blowing on me, and then they laid themselves down and sucked hard at my chest, in particular at the spot where I had complained of the pain. After having sucked for a while, they turned away and pretended to vomit. Whatever they vomited up in this way, they did not show me, but, as they squeezed it between their fingers, it looked as if they had been squeezing worms. This performance lasted, I think, the

[1] See, for example, Nordenskiöld (13), pp. 93 and 98.

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755 better part of an hour, and when I was allowed to put on my clothes again, my body was full of large, red, marks from the sucking. The two worthies entertained me during the whole doctoring process with a lively conversation which I did not understand. From the pantomimic show I could, however, gather that it was a consultation. For a fee I gave one of the physicians a shirt and the other a pair of tight-fitting drawers.»[1]

As mentioned before, in case of illness the Choroti try to back up the work of the medicine man by dancing; such dancing is then regarded as magically counteracting the influence of the spirit of the illness.[2] The spirit of the illness is by the Choroti called »mohsek ihitek», i. e., the arrow-shooting spirit, which, as I have pointed out in the foregoing, [753] signifies that the Indians believe that the »mohsek» in question has the power of causing illness by arrow-shot. The belief that illnesses could be caused by »fairy-darts» is met with among a number of different peoples, and, as we know, was formerly common also in Sweden.

757 The Choroti also try to cure themselves of illnesses by internally taking medicines consisting of decoctions of herbs, etc. It is, nevertheless, possible that the Indians themselves regard these, which we consider natural, remedies as being magical.

731 361 When an epidemic disease causes many deaths in a Choroti village, it is the practice of the Indians to burn the huts and remove to another site. This they do, either from fear of the spirits of the dead,[3] or in order to dodge the attack of the spirit of the disease.[4]

764 765 On the death of her husband, a Choroti widow cuts off her hair and burns it, and paints her face black with soot. We may take it that these signs of mourning also are of magical import. As an instance of this, the Choroti say that widows cut off their hair so that it shall not be a means of their husbands' spirits molesting them.[5]

769 One evening when after a long day's shooting I arrived at the Choroti village situated near our camp at Tatarenda, I was met by the sound of monotonous singing, muffled drumming, and the noise of magic rattles.

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[1] Nordenskiöld (13), pp. 95 and 96.

[2] Karsten (1), p. 14.

[3] Karsten (2), p. 30.

[4] Cf. Karsten (1), pp. 32 and 33.

[5] »When I asked the Chorotis why a widow cuts and destroys her hair, I received the answer that the dead husband, who wants his wife to follow him to the grave, is believed to attack her through the hair; in order to rid herself of this danger she shaves it off.» Karsten (4), p. 62.

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776 754 825 himself into a jaguar and, appearing in this disguise, kill people. Similarly, an evil wizard is believed to be able to send his soul into a horse, in which shape he will kill the person whom he wishes to bewitch. The horse in fact is the particular shape in which the tutelary spirit of a sorcerer is believed to appear, and is therefore looked upon as a demoniacal animal. Of other animals which are looked upon with superstitious fear the deer must be especially mentioned. This shy and innocent animal is regarded as an evil spirit, a *möhsek*, and its flesh is never eaten by the Choroti. On this point these Indians share a belief which, curiously enough, is met with among many tribes in different parts of South America. In the noiseless movements of this animal and the mysterious rapidity with which it disappears into the forest there is in fact something »ghost-like», which is apt to awaken superstitious awe in primitive minds.

754 825 Just as a sorcerer is supposed to be able to change himself into a jaguar when he wishes to harm other people, so he is also believed occasionally to assume, for the same purpose, the shape of a venomous reptile, for instance that of a rattlesnake. The bite of a venomous snake is generally attributed to the mysterious operation of an evil wizard.

776 823 Of spirits inhabiting what we should call inanimate objects the spirits of the *stones* are of particular interest. In order to understand the ideas which the Choroti entertain in this respect it should be borne in mind that in the interior parts of the Gran Chaco, and particularly in the country inhabited by the Choroti, stones are extremely rare or almost unobtainable. It is in part due to this fact that the Choroti regard stones and pebbles in general with superstitious dread and would never, for instance, put on a necklace in which a stone of some kind entered as a decoration. The reason which they gave me for this aversion was that an evil spirit, a *möhsek*, dwells in the small stone and would infallibly invade the person who hung it on himself. The explanation was, moreover, added, that when a sorcerer bewitches an Indian he avails himself of a pebble-stone which he throws against his victim making him fall ill and die. Similarly, when the medicine-man cures the patient, he extracts [755] the disease-demon in the form of a small stone. In other words, stones are shunned because they form one of the magic arrows which the sorcerers use to kill or harm their enemies.

753 The theory which the Choroti have formed about *sickness* and *disease* has appeared from some of the above statements. Sickness, like epidemic disease, is always due to supernatural operation. It is caused by a demon, a *möhsek*, directed by a human sorcerer. Wizards cause sickness by

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761 body the patient will die, *i.e.* his soul will be compelled to leave its abode. The exertions of the medicine-man again are aimed at expelling the evil intruder.

755 To conjure a disease-demon, that is, to expel it from the body of the patient by incantations and other magical means, is in the Choroti language called *apáhu*. The conjurations nearly always take place in the night or after darkness sets in. This is due to the idea, referred to above, that the night is the special time of the evil spirits. The natives of the Chaco are strengthened in this belief by the fact that catarrhs and other ailments from which they suffer are as a rule worse during the cold nights, whereas in the day-time when the sun is spreading warmth they are less felt. The treatment of the patient takes place outside the hut, generally under a shady algaroba tree, the place where the men assemble for their meetings and drinking-feasts.

The procedure is always about the same. The medicine-man begins his treatment by spitting and blowing vigorously on the particular spot of the body where the evil is seated, and this action is from time to time repeated. This is done to »disinfect» the spot and to prepare it favourably for the extraction of the »arrow». Beneficial purifying effects [827] are commonly ascribed to the saliva, and a medicine-man's saliva is particularly sacred, being imbued with the magic power which fills his whole body. Thereupon the conjuration proper begins. The »doctor» leans over the patient, closes his hand so as to form a tube, puts it on the sick spot and starts to sing, in a low muttering voice, a monotonous chant, ejaculating certain powerful words addressed to the evil demon. The chant mostly consists of refrains; it is evident that the efficacy of the conjuration is mainly ascribed to the voice itself and the breath of the curer, as well as to the very rhythm of the chant. The words or phrases uttered by the Choroti medicine-man are very stereotyped: in fact, they almost invariably seem to consist of the words: *náuhea, náuhea, hiame, hiame . . . náuhea, náuhea, hiame, hiame . . .* incessantly repeated, and only interrupted by the blowing, spitting, and other manipulations. Both words belong to the particular terminology of the medicine-men: *náuhea* means »at night», and *hiame* »go away!» The whole conjuration may thus be translated into: »When night sets in, go away, evil demon!» The phrase has reference to the fact that the evil spirits which cause sickness are believed to move about especially at night, and the doctor is trying, by his conjuration, to prevent the demons from coming back at that critical time to molest the patient. Exactly the same idea appears

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in the conjurations of the Toba medicine-men, as we shall presently find.

These conjurations are varied with other manipulations, above all with blowing, spitting, and rubbing the bad spot. Massage regularly forms part of the treatment applied by the Chaco medicine-men, and is the only action which may really have relieving effects. — Ultimately the doctor again leans over the patient and starts to suck vigorously the bad spot. He turns away, spits and hawks up and behaves as if he were going to vomit. Thereupon he takes something from his mouth and, turning to the bystanders, shows it to them: it is the arrow, consisting of a pebble, a piece of bone, etc. which he pretends to have extracted from the patient's body. The latter should now recover; but it may be that there are several of them in his body, or that a new arrow is sent into it which he will feel on the following night. Generally therefore the treatment must be continued for several evenings.

The Choroti medicine-men also invoke their guardian spirits (*mōhsek eis*), and if they succeed in extracting the arrow, this is said to be ultimately due to the assistance of their good spirits. The invocation of the »good spirit» in connection with the treatment of sickness is however a form of worship that I have studied much better among the Mataco and the Tobas.

The *M a t a c o* have exactly the same theory as to the nature of bodily disorders as the Choroti, ascribing curable »sickness» to possession by an *aittáh slahsa* (a »little» *aittáh* or demon) and mortal epidemic disease to a *nahút*. The ultimate cause of sickness is witchcraft. To extract the »arrow» or splinter (*aláh*) discharged by the demon or his human controller is the ultimate aim of the medicine-man. But he cannot do it with his own powers, he needs the aid of his »good spirit», the *aittáh talák*. If the good spirit does not come down to his assistance, the patient is bound to die. The invocation of the good spirit, or the prayer, is therefore the last and decisive action of the medicine-man's treatment of the sick person.

Whereas the Choroti medicine-man does not generally use any magical instrument when he treats a patient, the particular instrument of the Mataco doctor is a sort of rattle, called *tahús*, consisting of a number of pieces of tin arranged round a circular piece of leather. When the instrument is shaken it produces a dull sound which is believed to inspire the spirits with fear. At certain other conjurations it is worn by the medicine-man like a cincture round the loins.